Amendments to the Claims: This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing a solid polymer electrolyte membrane comprising an ion-conducting polymer, a catalyst and a high surface area supported material, which process comprises:

(a) associating the catalyst with the support material to form a catalysed support; and

(b) combining the catalysed support with ~~the ion-conducting polymer.~~a solution of the ion-conducting polymer to produce a membrane such that the catalysed support is incorporated into the solid polymer electrolyte membrane, wherein the ion-conducting polymer is in a liquid medium that is aqueous-based and is essentially free from organic solvents.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the catalyst comprises one or more precious metals, or combinations thereof, and/or other transition group metals.

4. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the catalyst comprises platinum.

5. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the catalyst is deposited onto the support material to a loading of between 0.01 to 50.0% by weight of the total catalysed support.

6. (Original) A process according to claim 5, wherein the catalyst is deposited onto the support material at a loading of from 1 to 25 wt% of the total catalysed support.

7. (Original) A process according to claim 6, wherein the catalyst is deposited onto the support material at a loading of from 1 to 10 wt% of the total catalysed support.

8. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the amount of catalysed support incorporated into the membrane is such that the metal loading is lower than 0.1mg/cm^2.

9. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 8, wherein the amount of catalysed support incorporated into the membrane is such that the metal loading is lower than 0.05mg/cm^2.

10. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 9, wherein the amount of catalysed support incorporated into the membrane is such that the metal loading is lower than 0.03mg/cm^2.

11. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the high surface support material is non-electrically conducting.

12. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the high surface area support material is selected from the group consisting of silica, titania, alumina, zirconium oxides, zirconium silicates, tungsten oxides, tin oxides and zeolites.

13. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the support material is in the form of fibres.

14. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the support material is in the form of particles with a mean particle size in the range of from 0.001μm to 10μm.

15. (Original) A process according go claim 14, wherein the mean particle size is in the range of from 0.01μm to 5μm.

16. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the ion-conducting polymer comprises an essentially aqueous solution of a perfluorinated co-polymer with ion-exchange groups.

17. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the catalysed support is in particle or fibre form and step (b) comprises directly adding the catalysed support to a solution of the ion-conducting polymer electrolyte.

18. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the catalysed support is in particle form and is applied as a binder to form a fibre network to which the ion-conducting polymer is subsequently applied to produce the membrane.

19. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the catalysed support is in fibre form and itself is formed into a fibre network which is thereafter bound with a binder, and the ion-conducting polymer is subsequently applied to produce the membrane.

20. (Previously Presented) A membrane prepared by a process according to claim 1.

21. (Previously Presented) A membrane electrode assembly comprising a membrane prepared by a process according to claim 1.

22. (Previously Presented) A fuel cell comprising a membrane prepared by a process according to claim 1.

23. (Original) A fuel cell comprising a membrane electrode assembly according to claim 21.

24. (New) A process according to claim 1 further comprising directly casting the membrane from the mixture of the catalysed support and the solution of the ion-conducting polymer of step (b).